

Life in Prison for Wilmington Man for 2016 Murder

Other defendants face prison time for murder, weapons, and child porn charges

A 50-year-old Wilmington man was sentenced to life in prison plus 25 years for the 2016 stabbing death of his girlfriend, plus an additional 16 years for a violation of probation. Deputy Attorneys General John Downs and Periann Doko secured the sentence for Robert Smith. In February 2016, Smith stabbed 45-year-old Inga Coffee to death with a screwdriver in a relative's home in the 2300 block of North Tatnall Street. A short time later Smith led police on a high-speed chase on I-95 from Newark to Wilmington while driving the victim's car. Police arrested Smith after leading them into the city of Wilmington, and crashing into a State Police vehicle in the 1500 block of Linden Street. In August 2017, Smith pled Guilty but Mentally Ill to Murder First Degree and Possession of a Deadly Weapon During the Commission of a Felony. The murder occurred shortly after Smith's release from prison after serving 13 years for an assault against Ms. Coffee in 2003. Detective Tom Curley of the Wilmington Police Department led the investigation. DOJ social worker Jen Kutney worked with the family of Inga Coffee to see them through the investigation.

Two men pled guilty in New Castle County Superior Court in relation to a 2016 botched robbery that left another man dead. Deputy Attorneys General John Downs and Allison Abessinio secured the pleas from Joseph Hunt, 33, and Durrion Morrison, 29, both of Wilmington. In March 2016, 39-year-old Jason Hicks of Newark was set up to be robbed because of a previous drug deal with Hunt. When the robbery attempt failed, Morrison shot Hicks five times. Morrison fled the state after the murder, was arrested in West Virginia for Possession With Intent to

Deliver Cocaine, and while out on bail for that charge, fled to Kentucky, where he was located by U.S. Marshals after charges were filed in Delaware. The charges in West Virginia are still pending. Morrison pled guilty to Murder Second Degree and Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony. Hunt pled guilty to Manslaughter, Attempted Robbery First Degree and Conspiracy Second Degree. Detective Tom Curley of the Wilmington Police Department ran the investigation. No sentencing date has been set.

Deputy Attorney General Allison Abessinio secured a 25-year sentence for a 31-year-old New Castle man after he was declared a habitual offender for a gun and drugs. In February 2016, police went to the home of Jonathan Johnson in the 800 block of Maryland Avenue to assist a family crisis therapist from the Division of Family Services. The officer noticed drugs in plain view, then returned with a search warrant and found a .22 caliber handgun. The gun was in a jacket that had been lying on the same couch where four children were seated when police arrived. Johnson pled guilty in April to Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony and Drug Dealing (cocaine). A Superior Court judge declared Johnson a habitual offender at sentencing because of previous felony convictions on drug and assault charges.

A 59-year-old Wilmington man will spend 12 years in prison on child pornography charges. Bonifacio Mendez pled guilty in August 2017 to 5 counts of Dealing in Child Pornography. Acting on a tip in May 2016, Wilmington Police and the Department of Justice Child Predator Unit conducted an investigation in which they learned Mendez repeatedly exchanged pornographic images with a minor. A Superior Court judge sentenced Mendez after his plea to 12 years in prison, followed by 2.5 years of probation. The judge also ordered Mendez register as a Tier 2 sex offender. Detective Jamie Tobin of the Wilmington Police Department led the investigation.